

Arthur Goodwin

Love and its climax

The Song of Songs 7:10 - 8:14

My beloved is mine

You will remember that the Song is concerned with the love and affection of the bridegroom, in this case King Solomon, and his bride to be, a Shulamite shepherdess. Firstly, as a reminder, let me give a brief resume of the experiences through which the bride has passed. We have had expressions of his love for her and also her love for him, which although generally fervent sometimes had waned. She even lost him, and had to seek him. She enlisted the help of the daughters of Jerusalem and the City watchmen. From the latter she received abuse. Again she slept, but her loved one called and knocked, but her lethargy was such that he withdrew.

But all these experiences have only served to increase her affection for him. In Song 2:16 she is able to say: "My beloved is mine, and I am his". She has reached the stage where she knows that her beloved belongs to her. But when we reach chapter 6:3, we find her saying: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine". Now she knows not only that he belongs to her, but that she belongs to him.

The pinnacle of affection

But in the passage before us in chapter 7 we reach the highest note in the Song, the very pinnacle of affection. Now, restored in grace, she can say: "I am my

beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (Song 7:10). Now she is assured that all that he says, all that he does, all his affections are centred upon her. Previously he had said to her in chapter 2:10 and chapter 4:8: "Come away my fair one", and "Come up with me". As she addresses him, she takes up his own words: "Come my beloved", "let us go forth ... let us lodge ... let us get up early ... let us see". Now she is in complete harmony and communion with him, and her affections are wholly centred on her beloved.

We are reminded of Paul's words to the Philippians where he desires "to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10-12). He goes on to say: "Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". Do we know the reality of having been taken possession of by Christ Jesus, our eternal Lover? Here we find the woman of whom King Lemuel speaks in Proverbs 31:10 when he asks the question: "Who can find a woman of worth? For her price is far above rubies".

Bearing in mind the prophetic nature of the Song of Solomon, the last verses of chapter 7 may have a reference to the Millennium. In that day Jerusalem will be the centre, where Christ the King will reign. Israel will be restored and will be the earthly bride, but millennial blessings will extend far beyond Jerusalem and it may be that these are the regions beyond — to which the fields and the villages have reference. In Isaiah 5:1 we read of Israel represented by the vine, and in the verse here in the Song we read of the vine flourishing. Tender grapes appear and the pomegranates are budding forth — sure signs of Israel's rejuvenation just prior to millennial blessing.

We have already remarked that "the expressions of love here exchanged between the bridegroom and the bride may also, without doubt, be largely applied to Christ and His heavenly bride, and it is such a spiritual consideration of the chapters of this book that will surely bring the greatest profit". Let us not forget this.

Her positional standing

In Song 8:1-3 the bride appears to be very conscious of her positional standing. She was but a poor Shulamite shepherdess, but her lover was King Solomon, the most glorious and highly ranked king of all the earth. She reasons that if only he was as her brother, as one brought up with her, then she could enter into a closer relationship with him. She could demonstrate her affections openly and nobody would judge her, or despise her for her presumption. If he were as one of her own

social standing she could introduce him to her mother's house, and there show him hospitality. In her own home, her mother would advise her. In such circumstances her love for him would be witnessed by all as indicated at the end of verse 1, and so would his love for her as shown in verse 3.

In these verses there is surely an application that we might take to heart. Are we always courageous enough to witness to our love for our Savior? Or is it that before the world we hide our light under a bushel and fail to render a testimony to Him?

Coming from the wilderness

In Song 8:5 we have a question asked, but we are not told who it is that asks it. It may have been the daughters of Jerusalem, or even the brother to whom reference has already been made. The question is as follows: "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Although the question might be somewhat enigmatic, it provokes a very lovely thought. Here we have the vision of the Bridegroom and His bride coming up from the wilderness: Christ and His church, now His bride. He had come from heaven to the wilderness of this poor dark world to win her. But at what a cost! He, the eternal Son of God, had become a Man, in order that He might give His life as a ransom. He has paid the penalty for her sins, and by faith she has received Him. But now in sinless perfection He is about to take His throne and He escorts her to the place of glory. She leans upon Him.

In the following verses the bride responds. Now in perfect harmony with her bridegroom, she is set as a seal upon his heart and upon his arm. It reminds us of the high priest of old, who bore the names of the tribes of Israel both upon his breastplate and upon his shoulders, the places of affection and strength (Ex. 28:12, 29). And the bride adds: "Love is as strong as death, and many waters cannot quench it" (Song 8:6-7).

May I divert for a moment and add an aside to my comments upon this verse, for whenever I read it my mind goes to Revelation chapters 17 and 18. There, at the beginning of chapter 17 we read: "And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, and talked with me saying, Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters ... and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy ... and the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth".

This vision seen by John tells of events that will happen here on earth after the true Church has been taken up to glory by Christ according to First Thessalonians 4:13-18. That faithless part, the apostate church that is left behind, is the scarlet woman who is here riding upon the revived fourth world power, Rome described here as the scarlet beast. For centuries she had dominated peoples and nations, indeed through her machinations they had achieved power and wealth. But ultimately we read in Revelation 18:5 the solemn words: "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities". Then God acts. So we read of her destruction by the very beast that she rides upon: "And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire" (Rev. 17:16). Without doubt this depicts a scene during the coming days of tribulation when the apostate harlot church will be overthrown by the then dominant world power that had one time paid homage to her. What a contrast! The heavenly Church leaning, on the way to glory; the apostate earthly church riding, on the way to destruction.

All of Grace

Solomon also tells her that he had awakened her under the apple tree (Song 8:5), the very figure that she had used of him in chapter 2:3. Moreover it was from her earliest times, when she was born. It reminds us of Proverbs 8:31, where we learn that even in eternity past "His delights were with the sons of men". The Church was no afterthought with God.

The reference to her mother is interesting, and reminds us of Galatians 4:22-26. Here Paul speaks of two mothers: Hagar the bondmaid, and Sarah the freewoman. These two mothers are illustrative of the two covenants: the bondmaid the covenant of law, and Sarah the covenant of grace. The latter answers to "Jerusalem which is above is free, and is mother of us all". Our relationship with Christ is all of grace, not law.

Prophetic scenes

We now come to verses 8-9, and again find a passage that is difficult of interpretation. It is probably the bride who is speaking, and she refers to a little sister who has not yet reached the age of maturity or full development. Chapter 8 is very much retrospective and also, I believe, prophetic and it is in this respect that

I believe that this verse is most readily understandable. As has been noticed earlier, the true bride in the Song is Israel, the earthly bride of Christ.

At this point, by way of explanation please allow me to delve a little into the history of the nation of Israel by going back to about a thousand years before the coming of Christ. Rehoboam, the grandson of King David, was on the throne. But because of his stupidity ten of the tribes rebelled against him and set up the Northern Kingdom, henceforth referred to as Ephraim, with Jeroboam as its king. The remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, under Rehoboam, constituted the Southern Kingdom and it was known as Judah. Both kingdoms were generally unfaithful to God – Ephraim perhaps more so – and eventually God allowed both to be taken into captivity. Ephraim was taken away by Assyria and its tribes are not heard of again in Scripture. No doubt, in due course, they were scattered across the world. Judah was taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, whose empire gave way to that of Medo-Persia. Seventy years later, King Cyrus allowed as many as were so disposed to return to Palestine to rebuild the temple and resettle in Jerusalem. These were the Jews who inhabited the land when the Lord came, and they were the ones who rejected Him and were responsible for His crucifixion; but these too were dispersed by Titus when Jerusalem was sacked in AD 70.

Now, looking into the future, we find that Isaiah prophesies: "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left ... and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:11-12). This regathering has in part begun, but it will increase as the Millennium draws nearer – and it is from these regathered Jews that a godly remnant will emerge, who will form the nucleus of the earthly bride of Christ. Ephraim will also be brought back to the land, as described in Ezekiel 20:33-38, a company which for centuries had been settled among the heathen, long separated from God, with little understanding of Him and not in close relationship with Him. This I believe is the little sister, spiritually immature, for whom the bride expresses concern. Unlike Judah, they know nothing of the coming of the One who claimed to be their Messiah, of His birth, His death and resurrection. She is like a wall, an obstacle that separates; in her case from the knowledge of Christ and redemption. And so her more mature sister desires to help and to build a battlement of silver upon her. That it was of silver surely refers to redemption, as Exodus 30:13-15 clearly shows. Then a door would be built into her wall, and she would become a means of entrance to those still in the darkness of unbelief.

Millennial blessings

The final verses also bring before us a millennial scene. Baal Hamon in verse 11 means: 'Master' or 'Lord' of multitudes. The whole world is Solomon's vineyard. The Prince of Peace will be Lord of all. The fruit of the vineyard is the tribute that all his subjects will bring to him. In the same way we will bring to the Lord Jesus: honor, power, praise, and service. This is seen in the figure of 'a thousand pieces of silver'. Philippians 2 tells us that "at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11).

Israel, once again united, and the bride now complete has her place in the vineyard and desires that her full portion, a thousand silver pieces, be her tribute to her Lord. The keepers too enter into the joys and blessings of the millennial age and bring their two hundred pieces. In verses 13 and 14 we have the last words of the bridegroom and bride in this lovely Song. He sees his bride as she speaks to her companions – no doubt she is telling them what a wonderful husband he is. He interrupts with the words: "Let me hear it". How the Lord delights in the expressions of love from His bride. And her response is: "Make haste, my beloved". She cannot abide the smallest separation from Him.

What a change will take place when all this comes to fruition. The great King will be on the throne ruling in equity and righteousness. Satan will be banished. "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). The Assembly whom He loved and for whom He had given Himself will be reigning by His side, and Israel now with full recognition of its Messiah will be the leading nation. The whole earth will bow before and do homage to Him who is Lord of all. The barren mountains of Israel will become mountains of spices.

The theme is love

And so we come to the end of the Song, perhaps one of the most mysterious books of all the divinely inspired Scriptures. It does not mention the name of God once, but He is there: in the person of the divine bridegroom! It makes no reference to the people of God, but they are there – no matter whether we have in mind His earthly or heavenly company: in the person of the bride!

This is not a book of doctrine or instruction, or guidance: its great theme is LOVE, and how expression is given to it in this divine relationship. Brothers and sisters,

fellow believers on Him, let us read again the utterances of our Lord as He speaks to, and speaks of His beloved, you and me. And read too the words of the bride as she gives expression to her feelings for the One who has taken possession of her. And these should be our words now, here in this cold world. Israel of old could see no beauty in Him, but to us He is altogether lovely. Let us not be hesitant to confess our love for Him.

